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## THE NORTH AFRICAN QUESTION AND ITS RELATION TO EUROPEAN POLITICS

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In 1905 the storm-center of European politics shifted definitely to Morocco, and from the Moroccan situation resulted a new alignment of the powers based primarily upon the political necessity of France.

To comprehend the North African situation and its relation to European politics we must understand that upon the future of Morocco depends the future of a French colonial empire approximately the size of Europe.

In his preface to the *Voyages au Maroc* of de Segonzac, Eugene Etienne, Député d'Oran, Vice-President de la Chambre des Députés, Président du Comité du Maroc, says, "Il est de toute évidence que de la solution qui sera donnée a la question Marocaine dépend l'avenir même de notre pays. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'un de ces territoires plus ou moins riches, plus ou moins désirables, au sujet desquels les transactions et les partages sont possibles. Les énormes sacrifices que nous avons faits en Algérie et en Tunisie peuvent se trouver annulés si la solution qui intervient n'est pas conforme a nos intérêts et à nos droits. Ces droits, a la fois historiques et vivants, nous les tenons de Bugeaud et de Lamoricière, de notre armée d'Afrique et de nos colons d'Algérie. Quelle puissance européenne pourrait en présenter de semblables?"

France assumed control of Tunisia as a desirable measure to assist in the pacification of Algeria and the south. She must control Morocco as a necessary measure to make permanent that pacification.

In Northern Algeria and in Tunisia the Europeans number some 10 per cent of the population. In Tripoli and in Morocco the percentage of Europeans is still very small. The native population consists of

Berbers, Arabs, Negroes (the last nearly all slaves or descendants of slaves), Jews, and those of mixed descent from these races.

The Berbers are the original people of the country, as far as we have any definite records. They were of Asiatic origin, but in course of time they have mixed their blood with that of Phœnicians, Romans, Vandals, Negroes and Arabs.

The Arabs came into the country almost immediately after the death of Mohammed and in what are now the states of Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria, conquered and hold in subjection a considerable portion of the Berbers. Certain Berber tribes fled before them into the Sahara, and either took up permanent abodes there or continued to lead a nomad life. Still others fled to inaccessible parts of the mountains and maintained their independence absolute until the French conquest.

In the country which we now call Morocco, there was little question of conquest. The Arabs were unable to drive out or to conquer the Berbers, and the Berbers were unable to keep out the Arabs and finally the two races settled down to live side by side.

The Berbers and Arabs have never to any great extent intermarried. They have both been more ready to mix their blood with that of their Negro slaves than with each other.

One thing must not be forgotten: The Berbers of all the Barbary states, conquered or unconquered, finally adopted some form of the Mohammedan religion, and the proclaiming of a religious war is the one thing that could bring these various people to act together.<sup>1</sup>

The Kabyles and the Chaouia, the Mozabit tribes, the Touaregs of the desert, and the Riffians of northern Morocco, are only some of the more important Berber tribes.

The Jews are strongly intrenched as the merchant class. The Jewish influence, politically, is strongly on the side of France. France gave them freedom and security and citizenship in Algeria, and the Jews of Morocco look for the time when French control of that country will give them the same benefits.

In 1830 France began the conquest of Algeria. Today it is a French

<sup>1</sup> M. Moulieras, professor of Arabic at Oran, has reported the discovery of a tribe of Berbers, the Z'kara in the Djebel Z'kara, who are not Mohammedans. The Djebel Z'kara is about thirty kilometers from Oudjda.

colony under a governor general with very ample powers. It is divided into the three provinces of Oran, Algiers and Constantine, each of which sends its senators and deputies to the national senate and chamber of deputies at Paris.

On the whole, the French treatment of the natives has been judicious and the French authorities have the support of the influential native leaders in Algeria. Large numbers of Arabs and Berbers are in the government employ. Many of them are in positions of great responsibility, and they have shown themselves capable, intelligent and faithful. The two famous bodies of native troops, the Spahis and the Tirailleurs (commonly called Turcos), are invaluable to the government, and rank with the best fighting material in the world. The lower grade Arabs of the town are inclined to be lazy as well as dishonest; but the better class are usually fine, able men. The Kabyles, the principal Berber people of northern Algeria, are less intelligent than the Arabs and they are certainly dirty; but they are hard-working, honest and hospitable.

In local affairs France has granted a considerable representation to the native population and has endeavored to extend the right of suffrage so far as possible without sacrificing French control. In 1870 the Jews, as a class, were given full rights of citizenship.

France is thoroughly awake to the value of Algeria, and great efforts are now being made to encourage and assist the right sort of colonization. The present governor general and his predecessor are both men of exceptional ability and experience, and they have worked hard for the welfare of Algeria. Fortunately they have been quite of one mind in their policy. M. Jonnart is now serving for the second time in that office; he preceded M. Revoil, as well as succeeded him. M. Revoil was able to serve his country most efficiently at the conference at Algeciras.

Tunisia, although nominally a protectorate, is as truly French as Egypt is English. The native population corresponds in character and in distribution very closely to that of Algeria. The percentage of Jews is considerably larger.

The commerce of these two countries approaches 1,000,000,000 francs a year and is increasing rapidly, largely owing to French enterprise in developing the possibilities of the "Hauts Plateaux" and of the Sahara.

The native situation in Morocco is most complex. Nominally it is ruled by an absolute monarch, but his sway is actually limited to a small area. Politically Morocco is peopled by the Bled-el-Makhzen,<sup>2</sup> the submissive tribes, and the Bled-es-Siba, the unsubmissive tribes. The number and extent of the submissive tribes, or of the unsubmissive, depends upon the prestige of the sultan at any given time. Normally the people of Morocco city, the southern capital, of the region round about, and of the central and western part of the country north to Fez, the northern capital, could be counted on to keep decently quiet and remain loyal. The people of Fez and of the country about there are more turbulent, and have always needed to be held in restraint. The Riff country to the north, the mountainous sections to the east, and the regions crossed by the Atlas in south Morocco have never been more than nominally tributary to the sultan.

Just now the situation is bad from any point of view. In 1902, Bou Hamara, the rogui, who was engaged in a revolt against the sultan, gained sufficient power to be a decided menace. In that year he had prayers said for himself in the city of Taza, in the mountainous country east of Fez, thereby practically claiming imperial rights. From that time, with varying fortune, he held Taza and the surrounding country against the forces of the Makhzen. The rogui, a shrewd native of the lower class, by posing as the leader of the anti-foreign element kept himself at the head of a considerable power.

The Sultan Moulay Abd-el-Aziz was struggling to suppress this rebellion when he was suddenly called on to face the far more important revolt under his brother, Moulay Hafid.

After the close of the conference at Algeciras the report was spread in Morocco that the European powers had agreed to allow France to assume control of that country, and that the sultan had sold out to the French. This report was partly due to the large loans made by France to the sultan, but it is claimed by French authorities that German intrigue had more to do with the matter. The state of unrest throughout Morocco rapidly approached anarchy. The anti-Christian feeling became intense, and attacks upon Europeans were of constant occurrence.

<sup>2</sup> The term Makhzen signifies the central government in a broad sense. It includes the whole ruling class.

The new and decidedly anti-christian sect, the Goudhfiya, an offshoot of the ancient confraternity of the Quadrya, became especially troublesome. The assassinations of Coppolani and of Lieutenant Fabre have been laid directly to the Goudhfiya. I shall have more to say of the Mohammedan confraternities.

The long series of anti-European outbreaks culminating in the attempted massacre at Dar-el-Baida, or Casa Blanca, resulted in the French occupation of Casa Blanca on the Atlantic and of Oudjda near the Algerian frontier. But France has consistently refused to take any steps looking toward the conquest of the country.

The cause of Moulay Hafid gained steadily. He was originally supported by a number of tribes who were opposed to Adb-el-Aziz because of his friendliness to Europeans. Continued successes brought to Moulay Hafid increasing numbers from the independent tribes, always ready to fight for the sake of spoil on the side of the victorious. In February, 1908, he was proclaimed sultan at Fez. In August he decisively defeated Abd-el-Aziz and was proclaimed sultan in Tangier.

The secret of the inability of Abd-el-Aziz to crush the revolt under Bou Hamara, and the more important one under his brother was lack of funds with which to pay campaign expenses. His treasury was empty, and even his oft-pawned family jewels had been for some time in the hands of the bankers. With sufficient funds at his command he could have again become master of the country, that is, so far as he ever had been master of it.

Moulay Hafid must play a very shrewd game. To maintain his authority over the tribes he must continue to appear decidedly anti-European in his feelings and his policy. On the other hand he must have money and the money must come from Europe. Also he knows that Morocco must submit to such reforms as have been decreed by the conference of the powers.

So much for the internal situation.

To France, and to France alone, is Morocco of vital importance. In the interests of her African possessions she must eventually control the country, and she must be left free to work out the problem in her own time. That she desires or is likely to attempt to take control at once is most improbable. Practical considerations, demand that she postpone that day as long as possible. But have it she must eventually

and rather than suffer serious interference with her plans in this direction she would be compelled to accept the alternative of war. The European policy of France was therefore shaped to secure the support of the European powers for her Moroccan policy. The first important point was gained when England, which had been the dominant European power in Morocco, agreed to withdraw in favor of France and actively to support the French claims. France has carefully guaranteed the commercial interests of all the powers, in Morocco, from any interference on her part; and aside from these considerations, the only special interest of England is in not permitting any power to fortify the heights on the African side opposite Gibraltar. Her agreement with France makes her secure in this.

The powers having considerable commercial interests in Morocco are France, England, Germany and Spain, in the order named. The relative percentages of the total trade of Morocco with these powers for the years 1904-05-06 are shown in the following table compiled from English and French sources.

	1904 PER CENT	1905 PER CENT	1906 PER CENT
France and Algeria.....	28.0	39.2	50.3
England.....	41.6	32.0	28.8
Germany.....	12.5	11.7	8.4
Spain.....	6.8	5.2	4.5

The trade of Morocco is naturally drifting to France and Algeria, because France and Algeria are best able to supply the goods wanted in Morocco and offer the best outlet for Moroccan exports. All of the powers interested have accepted as satisfactory and final the assurances of France that there will be no interference on her part with the policy of the open door in Morocco.

Little difficulty was experienced in securing for the French program the assent of the powers, except in the case of Germany.

Spain, while desiring to secure Morocco for herself, realized that she was in no condition successfully to oppose France, and that in the end she would gain more by supporting the French position.

The Mediterranean policy of Italy had been a failure; here the Triple Alliance had been of no assistance to her. Her desire to secure a foothold on the northern shore of Africa was very great, and her dis-

appointment over losing Tunisia to France was keen. In fact, long after the French protectorate was established in Tunisia, Italy dreamed that she might eventually get that country away from France by mere force of numbers. Indeed, a few years ago the Italian colonists outnumbered the French by four to one; the proportion now is less than five to two. Italy has given up any hope of Tunisia, and has fastened her attention upon Tripoli. France and England are both willing that she should have it, as the payment for supporting their plans in the rest of North Africa. Neither France in Algeria and Tunisia, nor England in Egypt, would be willing to see the other power in control of Tripoli, but would rather welcome an Italian colony as a buffer state. Here, then, was the basis of an agreement.

Austria could be counted on to support whatever position should be taken by Germany, and Russia to support France.

Germany had no important interest in Morocco. Her commercial interests were comparatively small, and they were amply protected by the policy of the open door. Her interests were indirect. First of all, she wished to assert herself and to show that Germany could not safely be left out in any international agreement. If France had not undertaken to ignore Germany in developing her Moroccan policy, Germany would never have openly opposed France in the matter. Also, she wished to find out the actual scope of the Anglo-French agreements. Thirdly, she hoped to sell her acquiescence in North African affairs for support or concessions elsewhere. One particular point where she wanted assistance, and especially French assistance, was in the Bagdad railway matter.

Germany holds from Turkey exclusive concessions to build a railway line, in effect joining Scutari with the Persian Gulf by way of Bagdad. The original idea was to raise 40 per cent of the necessary capital in Germany, 40 per cent in France, and the rest wherever possible. This plan failed. The next plan was to secure 30 per cent in Germany, 30 per cent in France, 30 per cent in England, and 10 per cent in Belgium or elsewhere. All materials for the road were to be bought in Germany, all contracts were to be given to Germans, and the work was to be done generally by Germans. In view of the fact that the securities of the road could hardly be expected to be profitable for a considerable period, the English bankers declined to consider the offer,



as there were no profits to be seen for anyone except Germany and Turkey. In case the proposed road was made an international affair, English capital could probably be secured. The French capitalists contented themselves with discussing the matter. The political aspects of the case must also be considered. Russia was opposed to the project. The road might at some time interfere with her political expansion in that direction. This was an added pressure on France to keep out of the business. Germany has been quite unable to finance the undertaking for herself. She is apparently forced to make it an international affair and to give up her exclusive privileges, or else to secure the necessary financial assistance from France. No other country is in a position to furnish it.

It is significant that following the close of the Algeciras conference German papers intimated that, in view of Germany's attitude in refraining from further opposition to the French program in Morocco, it might be expected that France would take a different attitude in regard to the railway matter and assist Germany in that undertaking.

By the Algeciras conference France lost nothing, and Germany gained nothing except the assurance that France had the thorough support of England and that Austria alone was willing to vote for the German proposals. The anger of the kaiser when he found that Italy, the tail of the Triple Alliance, had joined the French camp is a matter of history.

The present policy of Germany is extremely simple. On the one hand, while openly accepting as justified and necessary the work of repression carried on by France, with the assistance of Spain, she is by constant insinuations endeavoring to make it appear that France is stirring up trouble in Morocco to find excuse for interfering in the internal affairs of that country. On the other hand, Germany is actually doing, unofficially, all in her power to make the French position so difficult in North Africa that France will be more amenable to German reason elsewhere.

There are three possible courses of action open to France. First to refrain from interfering with the internal affairs of Morocco in any way. This would result in a protracted state of anarchy and a general attack upon everything European. Second, to support the sul-

tan actively with French troops. This would result in a protectorate and in a war of conquest, for which, as I have said, France is not yet ready. Third, to furnish the sultan with sufficient funds to enable him to make his position secure for the present. This would make possible the situation until the time is ripe for France to move in Morocco as she moved in Tunisia in 1881. When that time comes France will have no difficulty in finding excuses or reasons.

If a war for the conquest of Morocco could be confined to Morocco the affair would not be so serious. But such might not be the case. It is too probable that a sacred war would be proclaimed throughout North Africa and that the tribes of the Sahara and of the Soudan, Arab and Berber, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, would join in a crusade against all the Europeans. Northern Algeria and Tunisia are now too firmly held for such a crusade to be a serious menace there, but on and south of the "Hauts Plateaux," which separate the fertile region of the north from the Sahara, the results would be disastrous. Well aware of such a possibility, France is, as rapidly as possible, making preparations to meet such an eventuality.

The responsibility for a religious crusade would lie with a power far more potent than any sultan. I speak of the so-called Mohammedan confraternities. These secret orders resemble the monastic orders of the middle ages in Europe. They cover all North Africa, including the Sahara and the Soudan, western Asia and Turkey. In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia there are twenty-four important orders represented, and these countries are dotted with their zaouias or chapters. In the Sahara and the Soudan there are over one hundred and fifty important zaouias. Several of these orders date from the time of Mohammed. In power and influence they have grown steadily. Some are distinctly militant, and Europeans familiar with the situation believe that they only wait their opportunity to join in a general war to drive the foreigners out of North Africa.

On July 6, 1906, Sir Edward Grey called attention in the House of Commons to the unrest and the antagonism to Europeans which were evident, not only in southern Egypt but throughout the Soudan and the Sahara and stated that these indications were too important not to be given careful attention.

We know that the Snoussya has been most active in opposition to

Europeans in the southern Sahara from Lake Tchad to Timbuctou, and in the region west and northwest of that city. Duveyrier tells us that since 1848 every insurrection in Algeria has been due to the Snoussya. While many others, as the Rahmanya and the Derkaoua, are almost fanatically anti-European, there are a few that have been most friendly. The order of the Tedjina, which is influential in the northern Sahara and in Morocco, was most helpful to Duveyrier and to Colonel Flatters. The order of Moulay Taieb, of which the Shereef of Ouzzan is the head, is also friendly to Europeans. But in this case we remember that the house of Ouzzan is bound by strong ties both to England and to France.

We find, then, that France has to reckon with a power vastly more important than it was at the time of the conquest of Algeria. To protect herself from the possibilities which I have outlined, France is moving rapidly and effectively. Her object is to secure such control of the boundary between Morocco and the Algerian Sahara, and of the Sahara itself, as to prevent any disturbance in Morocco from spreading beyond its borders and to be able to localize any attempt at uprising in the desert. To effect this, lines of military posts are being established throughout the Sahara connecting in effect Algeria and Tunisia with Lake Tchad and the French Congo, with Timbuctou and French West Africa, thereby binding together the entire French colonial empire in North Africa. When we consider that the territory which France is trying to control is equivalent to some three thousand miles from north to south by as much from east to west, the whole occupied by millions of warlike peoples, we can realize the difficulties of the situation.

Back of the French army is coming the railway. Foot by foot it has advanced from Oran to Ain Sefra, to Duveyrier, to Beni-Ounif, and is now beyond Bechar, scarcely one hundred miles from the oases of Tafilet in southern Morocco. Soon another stage will be accomplished toward its goal of Timbuctou, where it will connect with lines to the French ports on the Atlantic. Not commerce but political necessity is pushing the railway south. It is the railway which will give to France the control of the Sahara, and security for her African possessions.